

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Digital Repository

---

Volume 6

Number 6 *The Iowa Homemaker* vol.6 no.6

Article 2

---

1926

## Christmas in Russia

Elsie Guthrie

*Iowa State College*

Gayle Pugh

*Iowa State College*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker>



Part of the [Home Economics Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Guthrie, Elsie and Pugh, Gayle (1926) "Christmas in Russia," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 6 : No. 6 , Article 2.

Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol6/iss6/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Homemaker by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [digirep@iastate.edu](mailto:digirep@iastate.edu).

# THE IOWA HOMEMAKER

"A Magazine for Homemakers from a Homemakers' School"

VOLUME 6

DECEMBER, 1926

NUMBER 6

## Christmas in Russia

By ELSIE GUTHRIE and GAYLE PUGH

"PEACE on earth, good will to men," are the words known throughout the world, and are yet never too told to become trite. At no other season of the year is there this true feeling of friendship and world nationalism. The old heart softens and old eyes become moist; the young heart quickens, and small feet dance in happiness. In all nations is the looking for ward to St. Nicholas and the joyous festival season. Each home has its own little gathering by the hearth, and perhaps one of the most lively and pleasing are those celebrations in a Siberian, or rather Vladivostok home.

For a week or ten days before, the busy housewife prepares the sumptuous food for the feast which last three days, December 25, 26, and 27. Before this time the Christmas shopping has all been done and the presents completed. The same tremor of excitement and suppressed curiosity reigns as does in your own homes. All shops and places of business are closed during the three days so everyone may partake of the Christmas gaiety. Greetings of love and good cheer are sent and likewise presents exchanged.

The finest fir tree available is chosen for the Christmas tree. After bright eyes have been warned to be tightly closed in fear of St. Nick., the tree is decorated. This is usually about five or seven o'clock in the evening. Very early in the morning the small feet patter cautiously about to see what Santa Claus or St. Nicholas has left. Of course, they, too, have a St. Nicholas or Santa Claus and one or the other is present at every party. He brings good presents for the good boys and girls, and bad ones or none at all for those that are bad.

As to gifts, cheap presents are never given. Mr. Woolworth or Kresge has no place in Russia during the shopping tour. They buy gifts equivalent to five dollars or more; and if they cannot afford these, then they give none at all. Often they give some lovely hand made embroidery which is priceless in value but costs very little for materials of which it is made. Often food such as rare poultry, a hog, or a calf, may be exchanged. The turkey, holy bird of our nation is so common there that even the peasants may have it every day if they so desire. Geese

are much more of a luxury. Candy, most treasured of delicacies by our children plays a small role in the Russian Christmas.

The church service lasting from nine to twelve P. M. on Christmas Eve is most impressive and lovely. The meeting ends by the singing of Christmas Carols.

Early in the morning the merriment begins. The younger people of the families go from house to house visiting their relatives while the older ones remain at home as hosts and hostesses. The merry bands of young folk, often students home for Christmas, with their hilarious jokes and songs, frequently go masked to the various houses where they dance about the Christmas tree singing "kaly ada," a special song for Christmas Eve; or tell fortunes by mysterious devices. The table is piled high with quantities of good things to eat: stuffed poultry, roast pig, leg o' mutton, ham cakes, pastries, and fruits. Each guest is invited to sit down and eat no matter how much he may previously have eaten, or at what hour he comes. The same sort of an entertainment is provided at Easter, and during other festival seasons of the year.

It seems strange to us that people of two lands so far apart should have customs that are somewhat similar. Given the same language we would find that the geographic, economic and social conditions are not so diverse from ours.

The climate of Vladivostok is not, as we may judge, as cold as in some parts of Russia. The lowest temperature in winter is fifteen or sixteen degrees below zero on a Centigrade thermometer or 00 degrees Fahrenheit, which we commonly use. The weather is rather moderate in that there are no sudden changes. During the winter the country side is embedded in about three or four feet of snow.

The country about this city is the richest agricultural part of Siberia. There are great mineral resources, coal, zinc, lead, salt and silver which are well developed industries and known throughout the world. Coal is sent to Japan and China. The oil reserve is also great, but as yet has been left in the raw state. The oil industry is still in its infancy. The forest contains the loveliest of hard woods and is one

of the sources for Chinese and Japanese lumber. Before the late war much veneer was shipped to the United States.

They grow all kinds of vegetables and have hundreds of pounds of berries to dry or make into jams. This preservation is all for home use as each family stores the supplies of this sort in a basement constructed especially for this purpose. Vegetables are buried under the ground and covered with hay and soil thus using the principle of the root cellar of other countries. Mushrooms, a product of especial interest to us Americans since they are considered choice and rather much of a delicacy, grow in many hundreds of varieties naturally. They are salted or dried by the barrel and also canned. People are seldom poisoned by their use as the gatherers have formed a skill in selecting the non-poisonous variety.

A great deal of poultry is raised, which when used for food is killed after the first frost and packed in barrels with snow and chipped ice to preserve it for the winter consumption. This method prevents the feeding of the fowl during the long cold winter months, and proves to be a great economy. Since the cows give more milk in the autumn the surplus is frozen in ten gallon cans, shaped like half a sphere to be used in emergencies or as needed.

Each village has its cooperative mill where the grain and rye are ground into flour. The villagers use more rye bread than they do wheat as much of the wheat is exported. Butter is used exclusively. Crisco and other butter substitutes are unknown to the Russian. The butter is heated to the melting point and the white curd removed. This leaves almost a pure fat product. It is then preserved in barrels. In some villages sunflower oil, pressed from the seeds of sunflowers, is used.

Education is steadily progressing. The high school or gymnasium as it is called, consists of a six year course which is equivalent to our high school and two years of college. Advanced courses in Latin, languages, chemistry, mathematics, astronomy, history and other sciences are offered. Formerly seven years of Bible study were given,

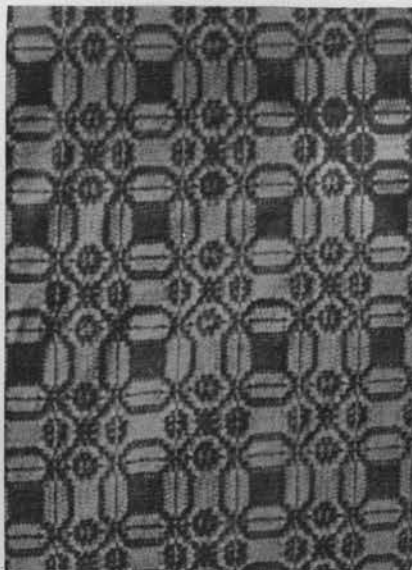
(Continued on page 16)

## Fascination of Hand Weaving

(Continued from page 3)

while for you to learn to throw your shuttle just hard enough with one hand and catch it with the other. You soon learn to find the treadles with your feet and even though you may have four or six treadles, you never make a mistake. And so you work, on and on, fascinated, regardless of time, watching your cloth grow thread by thread. Finally, when you do stop, you are surprised at the ache in your legs and back, but after a little rest you are eager to start again.

Coverlets are about the most difficult of handwoven things to make. Two or three shuttles are used, one for each color of thread. The weaving must be all of the same looseness or tightness, for the pattern must match when the two strips are sewed together. There are very few hand looms wide enough to weave a coverlet all in one piece. They must have a seam down the center, but if the pattern is carefully



Chariot Wheels.

matched and properly stitched together, the seam scarcely shows.

A bright wool scotch plaid scarf can be woven in a few days. There are firms which send out warps already made in different plaids. Plaids, as the McDonald, McDougall and McAlpin, are well known and very, very lovely. A hand woven woolen scarf in any of these plaids would certainly make a most acceptable Christmas gift for either a man or woman, young or old.

Hand woven linen guest towels with bright colored borders, or colored patterns across the ends, are lovely gifts and may be had to match any bath room.

There is an endless field in handwoven fabrics. A whole house, from the window drapes to the rugs on the floor, could be furnished with handwoven textiles. In many homes one room is furnished with handwoven fabrics, but we need not go as far as that. A pair of lovely towels in the bath room, a dainty linen luncheon set, a coverlet, bright drapes in the solarium or quaint rag rugs may be the bright spot in any one room.

Whatever it may be, or wherever it is used, anything handwoven has a sentiment attached which helps to make a house more of a home.

### Date Snowballs

Stone  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound of dates and put them through the foodchopper alternately with  $\frac{3}{4}$  cupful of shelled peanuts. Add  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoonful of salt and make into balls about the size of butter balls. Roll in confectioner's sugar.

## Christmas in Russia

(Continued from page 1)

one year in the preparation school, and six years in the high school, but this is not the case now. Also, there was no compulsory education. In the face of the fact that Russia has for so long been oppressed, we cannot but admire the steps she has taken in such great advancement.

Modern improvements approximate those of most countries. The city of Vladivostok which was founded in 1861 is quite modern and progressive. The population ranges between 400,000 and 500,000, a great number of these are of Oriental stock. There are approximately 25,000 to 30,000 Chinese and 2000 to 3000 Koreans. These latter people live in segregated districts. It is interesting to note that there have been no Japanese since 1923.

Homes are built for permanency, being frame structures made of heavy timbers ranging from 6 to 10 inches in thickness. A sort of stucco is sometimes used on the outside, but the inside walls are never plastered. The average house is of five or six rooms, sometimes there is a second story or attic which is used only for a storeroom. The heating system consists of a built in stove at the junction of four rooms. It faces in each room so each receives its share of heat. The fuel of coal or hard wood which ever the case may be is replenished every twenty-four hours.

Though the ceilings are painted, wall paper is the usual wall finish since they think paint fills up the pores of the wood so that air cannot circulate thruout the wood, thus causing a lovely harboring place for insects. The French windows always being lace curtained, have sills a foot wide to provide ample space for the flowers which are found in every home. The rooms are often filled with such plants as oleander, lemon trees, and maples. Hyacinths and roses are the Easter flowers. The "camellia", a Japanese flower, looks much like the rose, but lacking the characteristic perfume is often substituted. They also have outdoor flowers such as sweet peas and lilacs.

The Russian dress is modern. Only a very few of the peasants wear the garb of the native.

Since we have found that these two countries are so alike it seems that this same Christmas spirit which prevails only at holiday time might be carried over to last throughout the entire year. And, as it was said many, many years ago, let it now predominate our national and international relations.

Watches

Diamonds

**C. W. Dudgeon**

Jeweler

Ames, Leading Jeweler for Over  
33 Years

Fine Watch and Jewelry  
Repairing

Ames

Iowa

**Finest Fabrics  
Come From  
Stephenson's**

Opposite Campus

Also a delightful assortment of Christmas gifts.

**Stephenson's**

Opposite Campus

**SE-MA CREAM**  
FOR THE TOILET

CAGWIN DRUG STORE